

Self-Medication: Nurse's Firing Upheld By Court.

A nurse had a migraine headache when she arrived for work at the hospital shortly before her scheduled 3:00 p.m. start time.

She was told to rest. About an hour later her co-workers advised her to go home, but she stayed at the hospital and told her co-workers she believed she would be able to start working around 7:00 p.m.

At 5:00 p.m. she unexpectedly began breaking out in hives.

Nurse Used Her ID Card to Obtain Patient's Medication For Herself

To obtain a dose of Benadryl for herself the nurse went to the medication room, swiped her ID card and entered a patient's identification data. The equipment dispensed an IV dose of Benadryl, which was not what she wanted, so she disposed of the medication and entered in the patient's records that it had been wasted so that the patient would not be billed for it.

Then the nurse swiped her card again, entered the same patient's data and obtained a Benadryl pill which was what she wanted. The patient was eventually billed \$4.25 for the medication.

Another nurse, surprised to see that the nurse had not gone home, looked into the medication room to check on what she was doing there. The computer screen on the medication dispensing unit seemed to indicate it had just been used. She told her supervisor what she saw.

The electronic record was checked and it was confirmed that the nurse in question had used her card and a patient's identification to obtain medication for her own use. She was fired a few days later.

The Court of Appeals of Wisconsin ruled the hospital had grounds to fire the nurse for misconduct.

The nurse's only argument in her defense was to raise the question why anyone would risk their job stealing something that would cost less than a dollar if purchased over the counter at retail. That argument ignored the hard evidence that she had, in fact, self-medicated on the job with a patient's medication, an offense serious enough to justify termination regardless of the dollar amount involved. **Grall v. State**, 2011 WL 1991673 (Wis. App., May 24, 2011).